Water, Shade

by Tracy K. Smith

Of all the original tribes, the Javan has walked into the dappled green light. Also

the Bali, flicking his tail as the last clouds in the world dissolved at his back. And

the Caspian, with his famous winter mane, has lain down finally for good. Or so

we believe. And so I imagine you must be even more alone now,

The only heat of your kind for miles.  A solitary country.   At dawn, you listen past

the birds rutting the trees, past even the fish at their mischief. You listen the way

a woman listens to the apparatus of her body.  And it reaches you, my own wish,

like a scent, a rag on the wind. It will do no good to coax you back

From that heaven of leaves, of cool earth and nothing to fear.  How far. How lush

your bed.  How heavy your prey.   Day arrives.  You gorge, sleep, wade the

stream.  Night kneels at your feet like a gypsy glistening with jewels. You raise

your head and the great mouth yawns.  You swallow the light.